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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1409th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 30 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea)

- Question of New Caledonia (continued)

- Special Committee decision of 15 August 1991 concerning Puerto Rico

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

QUESTION OF NEW CALEDONIA (A/AC.109/1120 and A/AC.109/L.1787) (continued)

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of Papua New Guinea to introduce the draft resolution on this item. It is contained in document A/AC.109/L.1787.

Mr. MAINO (Papua New Guinea): Mr. Chairman, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Question of New Caledonia", contained in document A/AC.109/L.1787 and sponsored by Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

At the outset, I should like to convey my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all the parties concerned who have been involved in producing what I believe is an acceptable text in the existing circumstances for the Committee's positive consideration and adoption by consensus.

My delegation wishes to associate itself fully with the South Pacific Forum statement regarding the question of New Caledonia, which was delivered by the Chargé d'affaires of the Solomon Islands on 29 July 1992 in his capacity as the Forum's current Chairman. My delegation also associates itself fully with the South Pacific Forum communiqué regarding New Caledonia, which has been distributed to the members of the Committee as aide-memoire 15/92, dated 22 July 1992. It is expected that this aide-memoire will be produced as an official document of the United Nations at a later date.

(Mr. Maino, Papua New Guinea)

The Committee is fully aware of my delegation's views and position on the question of New Caledonia and I feel confident that there are positive signs on the horizon for all the parties concerned to achieve an amicable solution in line with the aspirations and the wishes of the Kanaks, the Front de libération nationale Kanake socialiste (FLNKS) and all the people of New Caledonia.

May I reiterate here that it is definitely the desire of the Kanaks, the FLNKS and the Government of Papua New Guinea to achieve self-determination and independence for New Caledonia. It is Papua New Guinea's ultimate desire to see the Kanaks, the FLNKS and all the people of New Caledonia work together in order to achieve what they want for New Caledonia. My delegation appeals to the Committee to continue its assistance to and cooperation with the authorities and peoples of New Caledonia to achieve that objective.

My delegation would like to acknowledge the commitment by France ensuring that the full implementation of the Matignon Agreement will proceed unhampered and urge it to take particular note of the desire of the peoples of New Caledonia to achieve self-determination and independence. It is important that positive developments towards a genuine act of self-determination and independence be fully and genuinely encouraged by all the parties concerned, especially the Administering Authority, so that the people of New Caledonia, in particular the Kanaks, achieve an acceptable and satisfactory socio-economic and political lifestyle.

In view of the close links between New Caledonia and the peoples of the South Pacific, we, the Forum member countries, are fully committed to providing the necessary assistance, financial or otherwise, for the advancement of the Kanaks in appropriate fields. In this connection, I should like to inform the Committee of the finalizing of the guidelines and

(Mr. Maino, Papua New Guinea)

procedures for the Kanak Training Fund, which would now be administered by the South Pacific Forum secretariat. I am particularly pleased further to inform the Committee that at the recent South Pacific Forum meeting in Honiara, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea contributed over $100,000 to launch the Fund.

The draft resolution on the question of New Caledonia notes that the new developments, especially in the economic and social fields, are being encouraged by the French authorities and we would like to see that they are genuinely undertaken in the interests of the Kanaks, FLNKS and the people of New Caledonia. The draft resolution also takes into account the close links between New Caledonia and the peoples of the South Pacific and the positive efforts of the French authorities in consultation with the Kanaks, FLNKS and the people of New Caledonia.

My delegation and other colleagues from the South Pacific Forum would very much like to see the inclusion of visiting missions to New Caledonia in the draft resolution. But once again we have not reached the political climate necessary to achieve such an important objective in the interest of the people of New Caledonia and the Special Committee on decolonization. Article 73 (e) of the United Nations Charter is also very important to the work of the Committee and visiting missions to the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories must be encouraged by all parties concerned, with the full support of the administering Powers. My delegation and others in the South Pacific, nevertheless, are very much encouraged by the decision of the French authorities to allow visits to New Caledonia by members of the South Pacific Forum. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them most sincerely for providing this important facility to us at this crucial time of the Territory's development. The visit to New Caledonia last

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year by the South Pacific Forum Ministerial Monitoring Committee is a most welcome sign.

I have the honour and pleasure, on behalf of all interested parties, including the members of the South Pacific Forum and the sponsors of this draft resolution, to present it to the Committee for positive consideration and approval by consensus, as the draft text reflects the realities and the circumstances surrounding the question of New Caledonia.

The CHAIRMAN: Since no member wishes to speak on the draft resolution, may I take it that the Committee is prepared to adopt it without a vote, by consensus?

Draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1787 was adopted.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee has thus concluded its consideration of this item.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE DECISION OF 15 AUGUST 1991 CONCERNING PUERTO RICO (A/AC.109/L.1788)

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to draw the attention of members to the report of the Rapporteur contained in document A/AC.109/L.1788.

As members are aware, the Committee, at its 1406th and 1407th meetings, on 28 July, granted requests contained in communications from organizations asking for a hearing by the Committee on this item. The texts of these communications have been made available to members in aide-mémoire 14/92 and addendum 1. A number of additional communications containing requests for hearing have been circulated in addendum 2 to aide-mémoire 14/92.

Subject to the concurrence of the members of the Committee and in order to facilitate our work, I suggest that the Committee, in accordance with

The Chairman)

established practice, decide to hear those organizations so far as possible in the order of the receipt of the communications.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: In accordance with established practice, the Committee will hear only one representative from each of the organizations. I would suggest that, where possible, organizations sharing similar points of view should select one person to speak on their behalf. I would also like to appeal to the speakers to be brief, limiting their statements to a maximum of seven minutes, so that the Committee can hear all the speakers during our meetings scheduled for this item.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Sagardia Perez (Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Mr. Sagardia Perez.

Mr. SAGARDIA PEREZ (interpretation from Spanish): My name is Jose M. Sagardia Perez and I am Chairman of the Bar Association of Puerto Rico. I come before this Committee with a mandate to speak on behalf of the Bar Association of Puerto Rico, which is a centuries-old institution with a membership that includes all the lawyers of the country. The Bar Association is a pluralistic and heterogeneous institution encompassing a variety of ideologies.

(Mr. Sagardia Perez)

Its resolutions and agreements, approved and adopted by its governing bodies, respect that pluralism and are not necessarily an expression of unanimity on the part of its members. Our institution has an honourable record of objective, responsible study of the legal and political situation of the people of Puerto Rico, study which is the result of earnest labour and the constant, responsible dedication of jurists of diverse ideologies whose professional standards and moral stature are beyond reproach.

The Puerto Rico Bar Association has the ineluctable duty to serve its membership, to defend the rights and immunities of lawyers and to protect and guarantee the freedom necessary for them to exercise their profession fully. Furthermore, the Association is duty-bound to cooperate in the improvement of the administration of justice in the best interests of the Puerto Rican community.

It is also a cardinal, essential principle of the lawyer's profession to participate actively and responsibly in the process of guiding the consideration of vital issues that affect one's country along juridically sound lines. The study, analysis and evaluation of valid, acceptable juridical solutions to the problem of Puerto Rico's political status have been legitimate concerns of the Bar Association. To make a contribution, from a juridical point of view, to a debate that is well-informed and thus enlightening, is a binding duty that we cannot shirk.

Our historical position has been based on the principles of international law with regard to the self-determination of peoples, as embodied in resolution 1514 (XV) of the United Nations, which led to the creation of this Committee.

I reiterate what has been and remains our institution's guiding premise

(Mr. Sagardia Perez)

in the consideration of the constitutional question over the legal and political relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States: the legitimate function of the Bar Association is that of identifying the minimal substantive and procedural requirements that should be met by the status proposals that will be presented to the Puerto Rican people so that they may express their preference, whatever it may be. It has not been, is not and will not be the function of the Bar Association to tell the Puerto Rican people which of the status options they should select. That is a decision that only the people of Puerto Rico can make, through the free and democratic expression of their wishes.

In August 1991 we appeared before this Committee to state the position of the Bar Association regarding the case of Puerto Rico now under its consideration. I must say that we were satisfied with the resolution then adopted, as it reaffirms the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination. However, I must point out now that the confidence that was placed in the Congress of the United States to adopt legislation allowing the Puerto Rican people to exercise their right to self-determination, by means of popular consultation in accordance with the doctrine and practice of the United Nations, has been shattered. We vehemently deplore this regrettable state of affairs.

What has in fact happened is that the legislature of the United States and other spokespersons of the United States Government have stated that Puerto Rico is a Territory under United States sovereignty and that its authority over Puerto Rico stems from the territorial clause of its Constitution. It can be deduced from this that the United States, by requesting and receiving from this Committee, in 1953, permission to stop

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submitting reports on Puerto Rico, implying that it had ceased to be a United States colony, committed a grave act of mendacity in violation of juridical truth. This monstrous juridical lie has been maintained and repeated for 40 long years. The situation is untenable, especially in view of the endeavours to establish a new world order under the enlightened leadership of the United Nations, an order that stresses the democratization of peoples and the relations between them. Maintaining and tolerating colonial relationships between nations is a contravention of the peoples' right to self-determination and is the very denial of the most basic democratic principles.

We regret the decision of this Committee to defer consideration of the case of Puerto Rico - a decision predicated by and based on the possible outcome of partisan political elections in Puerto Rico and the United States. The subordination of the solution to the problem of Puerto Rico's political status to election results seems to us a grave error because, among other reasons, it subordinates the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination to contingent events and tolerates the failure of the United States to fulfil its duty of respecting the decolonization guidelines and goals of this forum.

The commitment of the United Nations, the loftiest forum of both dignity and at the same time shame, must be to the people of Puerto Rico, regardless of the Government of the moment or the political party in power. That commmitment is not merely for the decolonization of a political body situated in a certain geographical region. It is more, much more, than that. It also has to do with the decolonization of the soul of the Puerto Rican in its psychological dimension and in its deepest existential meaning.

(Mr. Sagardia Perez)

On 22 November 1988 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted resolution 43/47, which declares the period from 1990 to 2000 the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. May the deferment of the consideration of the case of Puerto Rico serve this Committee as a moment for reflection and may it renew its commitment to the eradication of colonialism in our country.

We urge this Committee to call on the Government of the United States of America to offer a specific plan of compliance that allows the people of Puerto Rico legitimately to exercise their right to self-determination.

Mr. Sagardia Perez withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Miss Ferrer Silva (Respetable Logia Femenina Julia de Burgos) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on Miss Ferrer Silva.

Miss FERRER SILVA (interpretation from Spanish): I am the Venerable Mistress Brunilda Ferrer Silva and I address you today, along with ex-Venerable Mistresses H. Conchita Rinaldi and H. Minerva Gonzalez, on behalf of the Respetable Logia Femenina Julia de Burgos, a Puerto Rican Masonic organization.

Since 1983, the year our Lodge was founded, we have appeared every year before this honourable Committee to denounce the colonial status of our country. In the name of liberty, equality and fraternity, represented by you on this planet, we implore you to see that justice is done for our country.

Puerto Rico is one of the last remaining colonies waiting for its freedom. Historically our country has suffered by being a colony of two empires, Spain and the United States of America. Ironically, on the American continent the quincentennial of the discovery of America is now being

(Miss Ferrer Silva)

celebrated. In fact, this is a celebration that represents the genocide of thousands of indigenous people and the perpetuation of colonialism.

Another, more subtle approach used by the those in power to perpetuate colonialism is that of lulling the people into unawareness by means of federal economic aid. This brings with it the consequence of the loss of the work ethic and it also has an adverse effect on the dignity of the human being.

(Miss Ferrer Silva)

It promotes unemployment and limits economic development in our island. Under colonialism, people are alienated and are dulled to oppression. They have tried to buy our souls, as though they could compensate for our suffering with money. They do not know that we are like steel, which is tempered and grows stronger in fire.

Colonialism continues in a disguised form. The proof is clear. For example, in Puerto Rico the colonial and metropolitan Governments have declared thousands of advocates of independence to be "subversives" and have persecuted them merely for participating in peaceful pro-independence activities, such as marches, demonstrations in the Puerto Rican Athenaeum, the commemoration of the Grito de Lares, and other activities in defence of the freedom of our homeland. The repressive apparatus, headed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), with the cooperation of our Government, has opened files on about 145,000 Puerto Rican so-called subversives.

In 1987 the existence of those files was made public, and the case is now before the courts. In 1989 the Puerto Rican superior court ordered that all files be handed over to their respective subjects. But that did not put an end to the repression and persecution of independence advocates in our country. It has been proved that many of the terrorist acts that have disturbed and subverted public order, initially attributed publicly to independence advocates, were planned and carried out by agents of the colonial and metropolitan Governments. It is obvious that they were trying to promote fear and make the people reject independence.

As additional evidence of persecution and of the practice of punishing free expression of patriotic ideas and thought, I note that there are at present some 18 Puerto Rican political prisoners in United States jails. They are subjected to psychological torture, far from their loved ones. These

(Miss Ferrer Silva)

United States Government abuses have been repeatedly condemned by many of those who come before this Committee each year. Unfortunately, we know of no initiative by this Committee to help these political prisoners at least to be given less cruel, more humane treatment.

Should a referendum be held in our country, we would urge the United Nations to intervene to ensure that the United States complies with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and that the United States Congress commit itself in advance to respect the decision of the Puerto Rican people.

We, who represent Puerto Rican women who love and respect their homeland, are here to demand justice. If this Committee shuts the door to freedom, it will have lost an important opportunity to establish justice here and now. We know the empire is pressuring the Committee to cease hearings on our cause. But, members of the Committee, we appeal to your conscience and to the Divine Being we all revere that you will help us to be as you are: sovereign. We trust that the Great Architect of the Universe will realise our dream of freedom, equality and brotherhood for all the peoples of the Earth.

Ms. Ferrer Silva withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Marie Elaine Aloise (Pro Statehood Caguas Committee) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Ms. Aloise.

Ms. ALOISE: My name is Marie Elaine Aloise, President of the Pro Statehood Caguas Committee, a non-partisan group which advocates statehood for Puerto Rico. This is the fourth consecutive year we have presented the views of our civil organization to this Committee.

During previous hearings, we have discussed the subjects of colonialism, Puerto Rico's non-definitive status, Commonwealth as a political limbo and the meaning of self-determination. This year our committee will address itself to

(Ms. Aloise)

the question of dignity and how with our current status we do not have the complete dignity of either an independent nation or a federated state of the United States union.

Our current status does not give us the right to determine our future unilaterally. In fact, we are regimented by many laws enacted by the United States Congress. Unfortunately, although we are United States citizens, we have no voice or vote in the legislature, since our Resident Commissioner acts more as an observer-delegate than as a representative. We also do not participate in electing the President or the Vice-President of the United States. Our citizenship would seem to be second class, since we do not enjoy all the rights and benefits that our continental brothers possess. The image given is of outsiders looking in, with a door opening now and then so we can be given some handouts. We want what is ours, what the blood of our soldiers has been shed for in the various United States conflicts we have voluntarily shared. We want what 2.5 million Puerto Rican brothers who reside in the United States have in totality.

For us, statehood is not asking for a continued dole; it is the right to participate freely and fully in the United States democratic process. We ask not for privileges, but for rights: our civil rights as part of the United States nation.

That being granted, we would enjoy the dignity the other 50 states enjoy. We would no longer be considered the poor cousins to be helped economically; we would bear our share of the load. With statehood, we would have the dignity of working with the other 50 states to improve living conditions and help solve the problems the people of the United States face. We would be an integral part of the United States nation, not just an appendage.

(Ms. Aloise)

Our dignity has no monetary value attached to it. It is priceless, going far beyond that. Our dignity would manifest itself as a true clasping of the hands of our brothers, the other 50 states, and walking together to meet the future - equally, confidently, as true, first-class United States citizens.

Ms. Aloise withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Fernando Martin Garcia (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Mr. Garcia.

Mr. GARCIA (interpretation from Spanish): I am Senator Fernando Martin Garcia, Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño candidate in the 3 November gubernatorial elections. I am here in my capacity as Vice-Chairman of that group, the main pro-independence political organization in Puerto Rico.

We believe the Committee's decision to postpone its discussion of the colonial case of Puerto Rico until next year was the right one. We interpret it as an effort by the Committee to impose on the United States Government a timetable for decision-making concerning its obligations under international law to enact legislation to permit the decolonization of Puerto Rico. The basis for this decision is the expectation that the results of the November elections in the United States and in Puerto Rico will induce the United States Government to resume discussion at the next session of the Congress, in January 1993, of the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence.

Hence, next year, the decolonization Committee will follow the congressional deliberations and will reexamine the case of Puerto Rico in the light of developments that may occur. The United States Government will thus be challenged by this Committee to take concrete action in the short term.

(Mr. Garcia)

The resolution adopted by this Committee in August 1991 had far-reaching importance in that it had the endorsement of four Latin American countries on the Committee: Cuba, Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. This growing support for our cause reflects the fact that as international tensions stemming from the cold war have been reduced, dispassionate consideration of the merits of the case of Puerto Rico inevitably leads to recognition of Puerto Rico's politically subordinate status and to the conclusion that this Committee must play a leading role in achieving full decolonization of that Caribbean and Latin American nation, the last great bastion of colonialism in the world.

This renewed interest among the Latin American countries, which transcends ideological boundaries, in the colonial case of Puerto Rico was made manifest in the initiative taken this year to give the Government of the United States the deadline of 3 August 1993 for launching a legislative process leading to the adoption of decolonization measures.

Although it is true that the contradictions caused by colonialism in Puerto Rico are steadily creating in the United States an environment more favourable to reaching a final solution to the case of Puerto Rico, it is also true that there are powerful delaying forces at work that are impeding the development of a decolonization policy for Puerto Rico. For this reason, the support and constant vigilance of this Committee remain crucial in ensuring that the Government of the United States complies with its responsibilities pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

Nothing can portray the state of helplessness and subjugation of Puerto Rico vis-a-vis the Government of the United States so eloquently as recent

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developments concerning the policy of persecution, harassment and discrimination that has historically been applied to the Puerto Rican independence movement, both by the colonial Government and by the United States Government.

Recently the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico finally ordered that more than 135,000 files, which had been illegally compiled over more than 50 years - and this up until just a few years ago - by colonial police authorities against tens of thousands of independence advocates. These documents make clear - although they are but a pale reflection of reality - the degree of abuse and outrage to which the Puerto Rican independence movement has been subjected under the leadership and with the advice and consent of the Government of the United States.

In this past month, in a document which has been officially translated into English and a copy of which I have annexed to my statement, the Senate and the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico unanimously adopted a joint resolution that called on the President of the United States to order Government authorities to hand over also the files that had been compiled by that Government's agencies against Puerto Rican independence advocates simply because of their political convictions. This historic resolution was originally presented by Representative David Noriega of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, who was also the champion of the judicial action that culminated in the recent ruling of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico.

The fact that Puerto Ricans, when they are simply claiming their rights, are reduced to resorting to the discretion of the President of the United States is the clearest sign of the impotence of the colonial Government

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vis-a-vis that of the United States. However, we welcome this concern on the part of the legislature of Puerto Rico, and we shall be informing the Committee next year of its results.

Once again, we would reaffirm our deepest conviction about the importance of this forum with respect to the case of Puerto Rico. If the cause of decolonization shows signs of life in the Congress of the United States, this is largely due to the obstinacy, persistence and solidarity that this Committee has displayed with respect to the Puerto Rican people's right to self-determination and independence, even at times when such solidarity involved high political costs for Member States.

It is precisely because of the tremendous difficulties and obstacles that the international community has encountered in addressing the colonial case of Puerto Rico that, despite the fact that these efforts have not yet resulted in decolonization, this Committee, with its courage and its faithfulness to the principles that inspire it, has written one of the most heroic pages of its institutional life.

Mr. Garcia withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Miss Mariane Muniz (Organizacion Ciudadanos Estadistas Pro-Estado 51) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on Miss Muniz.

Miss MUNIZ (interpretation from Spanish): My name is Mariane Muniz, and I am speaking here as a substitute for Angel Herrera-Cotal, Chairman of the Organizacion of Ciudadanos Estadistas Pro-Estado 51.

Our group is very concerned by the situation of the colonial State of Puerto Rico. Although we are considered a Commonwealth in permanent union with the United States, we do not enjoy the complete rights of an independent

(Miss Muniz)

nation nor the full rights of a federative state. We thus find ourselves in political limbo.

Puerto Rico was conquered by Spain and oppressed by it for 400 of the nearly 500 years of our colonization. Our mother country abandoned us as war booty in a poor and ignorant condition. The United States, which got us as that war booty, brought us up, educated us and made us rich, but did not give us the equality enjoyed by our American brothers and sisters in the other 50 states. We have been kept in an inferior status as second-class citizens. Though we are United States citizens, we do not vote in the elections of the President who directs our destiny as part of the American nation. Although we have a representative in Congress, this representative has neither voice nor vote in the political body of the nation. These facts clearly reflect our colonial status.

Last year, although we do not vote in national elections, we witnessed two national parties intervening in our lives. A clear demonstration of this was the blocking of the plebiscite legislation in a Committee of the United States Senate.

The purpose of our presentation here is to urge the United Nations to act to ensure that the case of Puerto Rico's political status is considered in the plenary General Assembly of this international Organization.

Miss Muniz withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Michael Deutsch (Offensiva 92) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on Mr. Deutsch.

Mr. DEUTSCH: My name is Michael Deutsch, and I am appearing here on behalf of Dr. Luis Nieves Falcon, the Director of Offensiva 92, an

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international campaign to obtain amnesty and freedom for Puerto Rican political prisoners incarcerated by the United States Government.

In today's world, infused with the rhetoric of independence, self-determination and freedom, 23 of the best and brightest sons and daughters of Puerto Rico languish in the gulags of the United States for daring to be part of the unbroken line of resistance to the colonial exploitation of their homeland.

(Mr. Deutsch)

In this day of popular opposition to tyranny, when yesterday's prisoners branded as unrepentant terrorists are today's respected leaders and diplomats, 23 Puerto Rican women and men endure a daily life of deprivation, isolation and unrelenting harassment for their participation in the independence movement of their country. Twenty-three selfless patriots - teachers, farmers, lawyers, artists, factory workers, mothers and fathers - are denied the freedom to be with their families, to pursue their life's vocation and to be active in the movement for the self-determination of Puerto Rico.

It is the work of Offensiva 92 to build a campaign within Puerto Rico and throughout the world to demand that the United States Government grant the Puerto Rican political prisoners complete amnesty and release them. We urge that this Committee and the United Nations as a whole take an active role in supporting this campaign. Your support and efforts, including a specific call in the decolonization resolution of 1979 for the release of the five Puerto Rican Nationalist prisoners, were critical in helping to secure their release by President Carter of the United States in September of that year.

While the United States Government denies it holds political prisoners in its jails and penitentiaries, the undeniable facts clearly show otherwise. There are African-Americans, Native Americans, Mexicans, white Americans and Puerto Ricans serving time in prison because of their involvement in the movements of their peoples for justice and freedom. In the case of the Puerto Rican prisoners, their arrests, prosecutions, sentences and treatment while in prison unequivocally show that they were singled out for special treatment and excessive punishment because of their political activities.

These prisoners were subjected to intensive surveillance by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), including the use of sophisticated electronic

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and video technology, which even included telephone wiretapping in Puerto Rico, despite its specific prohibition by the Puerto Rican Constitution. This surveillance also included constant harassment of family and friends, repeated law-enforcement visits to workplaces and intentional interference with public, legal pro-independence activities. The prisoners were arrested amidst sensationalist news media reports generated by the United States Government, branded as terrorists and surrounded by intensive paramilitary and military security. They were placed on trial in armed-camp atmospheres and escorted to court in military-like caravans; supporters were required to submit to numerous searches before being allowed admittance to the courtroom, and in Hartford, Connecticut, the Government even built a concrete barricade outside the courthouse in fearful anticipation of a Lebanon-style car bombing.

These political prisoners were tried hundreds of miles from Puerto Rico, before juries which had no Puerto Rican members and whose identities were kept secret to promote additional fear of the defendants. The accused were charged with broad conspiracy offences, in many cases seditious conspiracy - opposing the authority of the United States over Puerto Rico by force - which permitted the Government to criminalize them for their support of and affiliation with clandestine groups fighting for independence.

Yet, at the same time, the defendants were prohibited from telling the jury about the colonial case of Puerto Rico and the illegal and coercive exercise of authority over their country by the United States. The United States courts refused to recognize and give effect to the customary norms of international law, including the principle that colonialism is crime and colonized peoples have the right to use all means to resist. The United States courts allowed these anti-colonial combatants to be treated as common criminals and refused to give any jurisprudential authority to any of this

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organization's resolutions and pronouncements. The sentences meted out to the accused, if nothing else, clearly show the political and vindictive agenda of the United States Government. Despite the fact that none of the defendants had any prior criminal background and were well-respected community leaders and activists, all were given maximum sentences. For most of the political prisoners this meant literally life in prison, sentences of between 35 and 99 years in jail with no real chance of early release under parole. The United States Government's own statistics show that the sentences given to the Puerto Rican prisoners were on the average 11 times longer than sentences given to other criminal defendants charged with comparable offences. These prisoners are serving sentences among the longest in the world. The politically motivated nature of the sentences is further exposed when one looks at the sentences given to those who carry out violence for right-wing causes. Abortion-clinic bombers, Ku Klux Klan perpetrators of racist violence and the murderers of Chilean Ambassador Orlando Letelier have all received sentences far shorter than those given to the Puerto Rican prisoners.

This political persecution did not end with the sentences and the banishment of the Puerto Ricans to prison. Their imprisonment has been a nightmare of isolation, denial of medical care, physical assaults and constant harassment. Unlike other prisoners, the political prisoners have been refused the opportunity to attend their parents' funerals, to participate in prison programmes, or to receive literature and other information about their movement for independence. Political prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera has been held for over five years in the infamous, Draconian Marion prison, which has been condemned by Amnesty International, where he is isolated 23 1/2 hours a

(Mr. Deutsch)

day, and Alejandrina Torres was held in a special underground, high security prison, which was finally ordered closed after international condemnation.

Today, eleven of these prisoners have endured these conditions for over 12 years and three others for nine years. Without international support and pressure the United States Government has no intention of ever allowing these political prisoners to be released. The call for their freedom has been taken up by organizations and individuals throughout the world. Amnesty International has been asked to investigate their treatment and status, the City Council of New York City is now considering a resolution which asks the Secretary-General of the United Nations to request that the United States free these prisoners and the American Association of Jurists is preparing a petition to the Organization of American States asking for a declaration that their human rights are being violated.

It is imperative that this body add its voice and specifically call upon the United States Government to grant these prisoners amnesty and release. A first critical step is for this body to send an investigation group to interview the prisoners and determine their treatment and conditions. Subsequently, this Committee must call for the United States to free these prisoners. Given the tremendous changes and upheavals around the world, the liberation of political prisoners from around the globe - from South Africa to the Philippines - the United States Government cannot be allowed to sit on the sidelines holding under inhumane conditions prisoners whose actions were motivated by the desire for freedom for their country and justice for their people. The concept of fundamental human rights calls for nothing less than the immediate freeing of the Puerto Rican political prisoners.

Mr. Deutsch withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Miss Maria Lizardi (United Statehooders Organization of New York) took a place at the Committee table.

Miss LIZARDI (interpretation from Spanish): My name is Maria Lizardi and I am here representing Mr. Wilfredo Santiago Valiente, Chairman of the United Statehooders Organization of New York. United Statehooders is a non-partisan organization that promotes the full political equality of Puerto Rican residents of the island as a federated state.

Allow me first to declare my support for the statement given before this Committee by the representative of Venezuela, Ambassador Diego Arria, when he submitted the draft resolution on the case of Puerto Rico during the August 1991 session. That statement represents a victory for all those who uphold the democratic ideal as the right instrument for channeling a people's aspirations to freedom. The statement also represents a step forward for those who, like us, advocate federated statehood for Puerto Rico. I shall explain.

In the first place, the representative of Venezuela recognizes that statehood is a legitimate option for the fulfilment of the aspirations of the people of Puerto Rico regarding its political status. This recognition opens new avenues for the discussion of the case of Puerto Rico in the United Nations.

In the second place, Mr. Arria situates his argument in the context of the new world order. This new order is the result of the collapse of historical materialism as the basis of the political and social life of our world and the resurgence of democratic aspirations among the peoples of Eastern Europe and regions of the Caribbean.

(Miss Lizardi)

As Mr. Arria rightly said, the discussion of the case of Puerto Rico in the United Nations took place in the context of the cold war. In that climate of confrontation, the resolutions of this Committee with respect to the case of Puerto Rico affirmed year after year the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the Declaration contained in General Assembly 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960. Unquestionably, self-determination and independence constitute an inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico. But it is also true that that people's wishes are not limited to that option.

Independence involves self-determination on the part of the people of Puerto Rico. However, statehood and the alternative of commonwealth status require in addition an act of self-determination on the part of the United States. The parties involved in any democratic process, either national or international, must meet three interrelated conditions: first, equality of the participants in the political process; secondly, discussion of and deliberation on the issues affecting the future of the participants; and thirdly, majority adoption of courses of action which do not limit or deprive any of the parties in any adverse way - in other words, the "absence of tyranny". I am certain that any future talks between the United States and Puerto Rico will have to meet these requirements and that the process will serve to strengthen democracy both in Puerto Rico and in the United States.

The United Statehooders Organization is convinced that political and social equality between the citizens resident in the island and their fellow citizens resident in the 50 states of the Union, and their capacity to discuss and deliberate the issues that affect all of them, can be achieved fully through statehood.

(Miss Lizardi)

We also believe that from either a national or an international point of view, commonwealth status - whether or not it has reached the point of "culmination" - does not meet the conditions of the aforementioned ideal of democratic integration. However, we recognize the right of the advocates of commonwealth status to opt for that status even though it does not meet those conditions.

Accordingly, our organization recommends that the Special Committee should do the following: first, it should exclude from this year's resolution any reference to resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960; secondly, it should affirm in its place resolution 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960, since the latter resolution most clearly presents the alternatives open to the people of Puerto Rico with respect to their status.

Miss Lizardi withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Olaguibeet A. Lopez Pacheco (Supremo Consejo del Grado 33, Puerto Rico, Inc.) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Mr. Lopez Pacheco.

Mr. LOPEZ PACHECO (Supremo Consejo del Grado 33, Puerto Rico, Inc.) (interpretation from Spanish): Once again we are here before this forum on behalf of and representing the Masonic organization 33rd Degree Supreme Council of Puerto Rico. It was exactly 94 years and five days ago that the United States invaded Puerto Rico by armed force. A close examination of history proves that Puerto Ricans were not consulted in any way about becoming a possession of the United States. Their heritage, their land, their individual and collective freedom passed into the hands of the United States without the holding of a referendum or plebiscite of any kind. Only United

(Mr. Lopez Pacheco)

States force and violence ruled in that process. There was no consultation at all.

The United States arbitrarily imposed the Treaty of Paris, concluded between the United States and Spain on the Puerto Ricans in 1898, interpreting the cession clause of that Treaty in such a way that the United States could, at its sole discretion, determine the status and condition of the Puerto Ricans. There was no consultation on this subject.

On 12 April 1900 the Congress of the United States imposed the Foraker Act, also known as the Organic Charter of 1900, on Puerto Rico, after unilaterally adopting it. Again, there was no consultation at all.

On 2 March 1917 the Congress of the United States imposed on Puerto Rico the Jones Act, also known as the Organic Charter of 1917, which unilaterally imposed United States citizenship on Puerto Ricans. The adoption of this law was cleverly used by the United States Government to recruit Puerto Ricans into its army during the First World War, when the United States entered that war one month later. There was no consultation of any kind with the Puerto Ricans.

Shortly afterwards the United States intensified its campaign of persecution against those persons who believed in the independence of Puerto Rico. The number of files on them was increased. More than 135,000 persons, including teenagers, were included in those lists of so-called subversives. Following orders and instructions given by the United States Government through its Department of Justice, and its police and military and civilian intelligence agencies, files were kept on persons because of mere suspicion that they wanted freedom and independence for Puerto Rico.

During the 1930s the United States Government sentenced a great many persons to prison for the so-called crime of believing in and advocating the

(Mr. Lopez Pacheco)

independence of Puerto Rico. Others were murdered, and their murders were covered up. An example of this tactic was the mass murder in the city of Ponce on Sunday, 21 March 1937, when 21 persons preparing to begin a peaceful march, for which they had obtained permission from the mayor of the city, were killed by the police, who used machine-guns to mow them down.

With the end of the Second World War, the United Nations assumed a more serious responsibility than the one that had led to its creation, namely, decolonization. However, among the administering Powers there was disguised, and sometimes open, opposition to recognizing the colonial situation of peoples whose exploitation brought profit and advantage to some of those Powers. We find proof of this statement in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories contained in General Assembly resolution 66 (I) of 14 December 1946, which between 1946 and 1960, with or without the consent of the General Assembly, excluded four territories of which the United States had taken possession. It is worth pointing out that two of those territories, Alaska and Hawaii, are today states of the United States. The third territory is the Panama Canal zone, which the United States is occupying and exploiting for its benefit. The fourth territory excluded was Puerto Rico.

The Plan of Action for the Full Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly on 11 December 1980. It categorically rejects any agreement, arrangement or unilateral action by colonial and racist Powers which ignores, violates, denies or conflicts with the inalienable right of peoples under colonial domination to self-determination and independence. There were 119 votes in favour of resolution 35/118. Among the seven that voted against it was the United States.

(Mr. Lopez Pacheco)

The United States Government continues its repression, persecution, imprisonment, murder and abduction of and compilation of files on Puerto Ricans who believe in independence; its agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), keep on file lies and falsehoods about them. The judiciary does not dare to interfere in this matter, on the pretext that those agencies have the discretion to operate in that way.

In a supremely ridiculous act, contrary to a Puerto Rican Supreme Court decision that took three years to hand down, the Puerto Rican Government is flouting the law by refusing tc return to me my files, numbers 17,684 and 21,236. They tell me, almost surreptitiously, that the files have been lost or mislaid. Oddly enough, as in the case of another missing file, my son too was murdered by United States Government agencies.

How long will the people of Puerto Rico have to endure these violations of human rights? It is up to this Committee to respond.

Mr. Lopez Pacheco withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Linda Bakiel (Center for Constitutional Rights and Instituto Puertorriqueño de Derechos Civiles) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Ms. Bakiel.

Ms. BAKIEL (Center for Constitutional Rights and Instituto Puertorriqueño de Derechos Civiles): My name is Linda Bakiel; I am here with Jose Luis Morin. This statement is presented on behalf of two institutions that have worked together over the past decade to vindicate the human and civil rights of the Puerto Rican people both in the United States and in Puerto Rico. The Center for Constitutional Rights and the Instituto Puertorriqueño de Derechos Civiles both appreciate the vital importance of

(Ms. Bakiel)

this Committee's continuing commitment to the fulfilment of the goal of the abolition of colonialism by the year 2000; we are fortified in our own efforts by that commitment.

In the fall of 1991, public hearings on the planning and cover-up of the murder of two young independence advocates by members of the police of Puerto Rico atop Cerro Maravilla were conducted by the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate of Puerto Rico. Those hearings began 13 years after the assassination of Carlos Soto Arrivi and Arnaldo Dario Rosado. They concluded leaving the question of the United States role in and responsibility for this tragedy broadly hinted at but never clearly answered. This fundamental defect is attributable not to the Senate's investigation but to its limited power to compel the United States to reveal its own secret dirty war in Latin America. Nevertheless, the hearings shed much-needed light on the strategy that has ben used to manipulate and distort the entire political process in Puerto Rico in order to defeat the clear mandate for decolonization.

Ignacio Rivera, the first witness to testify at the public hearings on this phase of the Cerro Maravilla tragedy, identified himself as a former agent of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). What Mr. Rivera learned about political justice and crime, or criminal justice and politics, shocked him, he testified. He learned that pro-independence advocates were deliberately arrested on false charges, convicted on evidence supplied by law-enforcement authorities and left to serve lengthy sentences long after prosecutors knew of their innocence. He learned that such things happened as part of a premeditated plan to make independence an unacceptable political alternative.

He learned these and other disturbing facts while serving as defence lawyer for Julio Cesar Andrades, an extraordinarily corrupt police officer who

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pled guilty to scores of violent crimes committed while an employee of the police of Puerto Rico, for which he has not spent one day in jail. Mr. Rivera's client informed him that agents of the United States Government in Puerto Rico decided during the 1970s that Puerto Rico could be "saved" from "Latin American-style revolutions" only by the creation of a small band of vigilantes who would wage their own dirty war against these "terrorists", as was being done in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and elsewhere. They called themselves los Amigos de la Democracia, the Friends of Democracy. These Friends of Democracy included Mr. Jose A. Lopez, the chief United States Marshal in Puerto Rico for more than a decade, who is currently serving as United States Marshal in Miami, Florida, and Lieutenant Alex de la Zerda of the United States Navy in Puerto Rico. Their idea was to save democracy by identifying and neutralizing anyone they believed posed a threat to its existence in Puerto Rico. These persons were identified as independentistas, nationalists, communists and all who opposed the violent overthrow of the Government of Cuba.

The Friends of Democracy relied upon tactics that were as violent as they were illegal. Among the targets of their bombs was the Puerto Rican Bar Association, the professional organization of which every attorney admitted to the practice of law in Puerto Rico is a member. Material for the bomb came from the United States Navy, Mr. Rivera testified. United States Marshal Lopez provided a car and other physical and logistical protection for the bombers. Other targets of their bombs included the liberal periodical Avance and the weekly independence newspaper Claridad, which, despite repeated fire-bombings and other violent assaults on their offices, presses and personnel, is still published.

(Ms. Bakiel)

One would like to believe that these practices were an anomaly divorced from any official policy of the United States. But it is clear, even from the reluctant and cautious testimony of Mr. Rivera, that this is not the case. The policies implemented by los Amigos de la Democracia were identical to and integrated with others carried out within the intelligence division of the police of Puerto Rico, which was engaged in a variety of practices designed to limit the public appeal of independence as a viable resolution to the colonial status of Puerto Rico.

These practices were not spontaneous but were the fruit of plans and policies that did not originate in Puerto Rico. Their authors, regardless of who confessed to promulgating them, were not Puerto Rican. The most telling question in six months of hearings was that of Special Investigator Edgardo Perez Viera to former National Guard Commander Nolla, the professed author of the plan: "Why was the plan for the defence of the internal security of Puerto Rico written in English?".

Commander Nolla did not have to answer. The history of Puerto Rico makes the answer clear. From the earliest days of the United States invasion of Puerto Rico, when General Miles proclaimed that he had come to bring "the blessings of democracy" to those who obeyed him, and to hunt and subdue all who persisted in resisting, the United States has used both overt military power and the powers of civilian law-enforcement agencies, including the FBI and the federal courts, to repress and punish the expression of political opinions in favour of independence.

These policies, designed to silence independence advocates, are anything but spontaneous. This was another important lesson of the Senate hearings on Cerro Maravilla. Commander Nolla testified, for example, that in 1978 - the

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year the assassinations at Cerro Maravilla were carried out and the year in which President Carter was expected to make a historic presidential proclamation regarding Puerto Rico's right to self-determination - a special seminar was conducted in Puerto Rico using funds from the United States Law Enforcement Assistance Agency. Its objective was to train prosecutors, police and other law-enforcement and security forces in Puerto Rico in the type of low-intensity counterinsurgency warfare the United States believed appropriate for its only Territory in Latin America.

The seminar advised using a special set of criminal laws and procedures to charge, arrest, try and punish those whose advocacy of independence could be prosecuted as "criminal". It advocated adopting a separate set of laws and standards exempt from the requirements of human and civil rights in order to neutralize those who would be branded as terrorists and to send strong messages to the public about the price of the struggle for self-determination. "The terrorist cannot be rehabilitated", one section of the seminar materials read. The only solution, it advised, was "the death of the terrorist".

The most recent round of hearings makes it obvious that Cerro Maravilla was anything but an aberration. It was the result of a policy carried out more subtly, and often with the blessing of the United States courts, against independentistas whose understanding of the history of their country leads them to adopt methods of struggle the United States prosecutes as violations of its domestic law.

(Ms. Bakiel)

More sophisticated techniques are used today. Instead of hilltop entrapments and assassinations, we see men and women sentenced to 65 or 98 years of incarceration for engaging in the struggle to exercise the right to independence and self-determination.

The punishment and torture of the nearly two dozen Puerto Rican political prisoners in United States jails today stands as a testament to United States defiance of standards the rest of the world has, with a few significant exceptions, long since acceded to. They are constant reminders of the ways in which the United States uses its power to pervert the political process in Puerto Rico in order to retain its colonial possession, at least until it is no longer profitable or militarily advantageous to do so.

Now that the hope of a valid plebiscite on the status of Puerto Rico has been proved entirely false, we count on the support of the international community and on this Committee to assist in the eradication of colonialism in Puerto Rico in order to fulfil its historic and eminently achievable goal of passing on to the next generation a world free of colonialism.

Ms. Bakiel withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Minerva Gonzalez (Comite de Afirmacion Puertorriqueña) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on Ms. Gonzalez.

Ms. GONZALEZ (Comite de Afirmacion Puertorriqueña) (interpretation from Spanish): I am Minerva Gonzalez, and I am representing the Comite de Afirmacion Puertorriqueña.

We have come before this international forum to denounce the colonial situation besetting Puerto Rico since 25 July 1898, when the naval and military forces of the United States invaded and occupied our homeland. From

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that date on, the Congress of the United States has enacted unilateral legislation concerning the internal and external affairs of Puerto Rico. In 1899 and 1900 the military government that was imposed on us following the invasion despoiled dozens of Puerto Rican farmers and business persons of their wealth, dooming them to ruin. They converted Puerto Rico into a sugar factory to meet the needs of the United States market, while turning us from landowners into serfs. They impoverished our farm workers and subjected them to a life of misery in order to enrich United States shareholders and industrialists. And as if that were not enough, they enacted legislation imposing United States citizenship on all nationals of Puerto Rico, with the purpose of destroying Puerto Rican identity and love of homeland.

By imposing that citizenship, they were able to make use of thousands of Puerto Ricans in the United States Government's wars of expansion and economic control. As is well known, Puerto Rican soldiers recruited for these imperialistic United States wars are always the first to go to the battlefront and the first to die, all because of an imposed citizenship they did not seek. These are the soldiers referred to by popular wisdom as "cannon fodder" for voracious imperialist appetites.

The patriots who denounced these outrages, such as Don Pedro Albizu Campos, Griselio Torresola, Blanca Canales, Lolita Lebron and so many others, were persecuted and tried in federal and colonial courts and unjustly imprisoned for long terms. Albizu and Torresola dramatically symbolize the heroism of this struggle, because both of them died as martyrs of the liberation process.

But this anti-colonial struggle has underlying reasons that must be told. Recently the colonial government of Puerto Rico has been forced

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to admit that it is guilty of violating the civil rights of 135,000 pro-independence Puerto Ricans whom it persecuted, using constables, police personnel, detectives, secret agents and informants, and also with the help of State security agencies of the United States Government. It is now blatantly manifest that the purpose of this brutal persecution is to alienate the pro-independence feelings of Puerto Ricans and make the ideal of a free homeland into a crime. For these reasons, our country is still experiencing a crisis of political uncertainty and fears independence, the inevitable destiny of its history.

It is also no secret that colonialism in Puerto Rico has led to struggles that have resulted in imprisonment or death for rebel patriots. We are not asking anything for the dead, because they are our inspiration. But we do state before this forum that, as a result of the damnable colonial system, more than 24 patriots are doomed to heavy sentences and harsh conditions in the dungeons of the United States prison system. It is ironic that while the United States Government is calling on other countries to free their political prisoners, it forgets the Puerto Ricans that it is holding in its own prisons because they committed the same "crime" that George Washington committed against English monarchical rule: the "crime" of loving the freedom of their homeland. Worse still, United States authorities call for freedom for other countries and declare themselves the gods of freedom, but for the past 94 years they have kept the independence of Puerto Rico walled up in the prison of colonialism.

We want this forum to know that we are speaking not only as Puerto Ricans who have suffered because our homeland has been usurped by Yankee imperialism but also as Puerto Ricans expelled from our country, because we were

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unscrupulously forced to emigrate by the colonial government of the Commonwealth so that our land could be handed over on a silver platter to major United States interests.

We were forced to emigrate because they believed that we would disappear, but we are still here, alive and well. We are here to claim our right to return to our homeland and the right not to be excluded from Puerto Rican political processes. We are not in the United States of our own free will, and therefore we demand the right to participate in the decisions that relate to the political destiny of Puerto Rico. It is true that we are the Puerto Rican diaspora in the United States, but we recognize only one nation: Puerto Rico.

We are speaking not of a foreign Government but of the imperialist Government of the United States, which is a Member of the United Nations and which has refused to recognize the jurisdiction of this body since 1972, alleging that the decolonization Committee's resolutions on Puerto Rico "constitute intervention in the internal affairs of the United States". However, that same Government quite cynically makes use of this institution to adopt resolutions calling for invasions and violations of the sovereignty of other countries and nations.

It is thus incumbent on this Committee and the United Nations to demand the decolonization of Puerto Rico. We are captives of the all-powerful United States empire. We are being robbed of our wealth. We are being used as guinea pigs. Our environment is being destroyed. Our land is being used as a military base to protect hemispheric interests and to maintain the economic disaster that has been imposed on the peoples of the Caribbean, Central America and South America.

(Ms. Gonzalez)

The United Nations has the moral duty and the responsibility to intervene and to assume jurisdiction in the case of Puerto Rico. The United States Government must not continue to violate the human rights of Puerto Ricans. The independence and sovereignty of Puerto Rico must be recognized by the United Nations, and they must be demanded with honour. The United States must terminate its political and military occupation of Puerto Rico and indemnify Puerto Ricans for all the material and psychological damage that it has caused since that unhappy day of the invasion.

Long live free Puerto Rico! We call for freedom for Puerto Rican prisoners of war.

Ms. Gonzalez withdrew.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to draw members' attention to requests for hearing which have just been circulated in addendum 3 to aide-memoire 14/92, relating to Puerto Rico. If there are no objections, may I take it that the Committee agrees to accede to these requests?

It was so decided.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ronald Fernandez (Justice for Puerto Rico) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Mr. Fernandez.

Mr. FERNANDEZ: My name is Ronald Fernandez and I am a United States citizen of Spanish ancestry, representing a group called "Justice for Puerto Rico". My aim today is to let United States Government documents underline the essence of Puerto Rico's colonial situation: 40 years ago United States officials mocked the United Nations; and 40 minutes ago they allowed pharmaceutical companies to repatriate far more money from drugs than their notorious predecessors ever earned from sugar. Please note that the United States Federal documents which are the basis of my presentation are attached to "Justice for Puerto Rico's" statement.

On 20 November 1953 President Eisenhower and members of his Cabinet sat down to breakfast. They were bothered by what State Department officials had recently called the extremism of those seeking to use the United Nations as a means to a non-colonial world. What was the United States going to do; and how was it going to deal with the terrible anti-colonial pressure of the United Nations Indian contingent?

President Eisenhower had an idea: offer the Puerto Ricans independence. It would silence the Indians and, as Ambassador Lodge told a worried Secretary of State Dulles later in the day:

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"the President won't be offering them independence anyway, only Congress can do that, he will just be saying how the President feels."

Eight days later an excited Ambassador Lodge told the President that "your idea about Puerto Rico turned out to be a ten strike": the Indians not only had loved it; Ambassador Krishna Menon had, for the very first time, praised the United States.

The trouble came from the Puerto Ricans, who as colonials had not been invited to breakfast. Recall that when in 1945 57 per cent of Puerto Rico's elected representatives asked President Truman for independence, he not only told them "no": he vetoed a plebiscite bill which was overwhelmingly endorsed by Puerto Rico's elected representatives. Congress would offer neither statehood nor independence, so islanders would have to settle for what was later called commonwealth status.

In 1952 an overwhelming majority of Puerto Rico's voters approved their new political status. The United States instantly trumpeted this vote as proof of the self-determination of the Puerto Rican people; and in 1953 Ambassador Lodge used the 1952 vote as a primary basis for the United States request to remove Puerto Rico from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Now, after nothing more than a casual breakfast meeting, the United States tried to reverse course. In fact, despite two January 1954 resolutions from the Puerto Rican legislature - both of which reaffirmed the island's commitment to commonwealth status - the attached letters show the United States Government, at its highest levels, trying to redetermine the self-determination of the Puerto Rican people.

The State Department's Mason Sears made these suggestions: Entice then Governor Luis Munoz Marin by

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"hinting at the almost certain honour which would attach to Governor Munoz should he become the first President of Puerto Rico."

Offer him economic benefits and also explain

"that the establishment of independence would have an international impact in view of the colonial issue which is so red hot in most parts of the world."

Nothing worked. So when Puerto Rican nationalists took their independence case to the United States House of Representatives in March 1954, the United States shamelessly called them fanatics for going against the expressed will of the Puerto Rican people - which was, of course, exactly what United Nations Ambassador Lodge was doing, not only in March of 1954 but, as the letters we have attached show, in March of 1956 as well. This time Lodge wanted an independence resolution from the United States Congress and, as in 1954, it was an obscene public-relations gimmick. As he told the President's assistant,

"if the offer were rejected, our Congress would at the very least have taken a step which would be interpreted as anti-colonial and do us great good throughout the world."

And if the Puerto Ricans accepted the offer "many problems would be solved.

In Congress Speaker of the House Joseph Martin told Lodge "that Congress would gladly shed Puerto Rico at any time." And the President's assistant also thought the idea had some merit, as long as the Congressional leadership would wheel the Eisenhower Administration through any possible Congressional opposition.

And the Puerto Rican people? There is no evidence in the presidential libraries to indicate that Puerto Ricans were told about Congress's plans to shed them. On the contrary, in utter contempt for the anti-colonial

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principles it broadcast, one part of the United States Government tried to push independence behind the backs of the Puerto Rican people; the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation simultaneously sought to repress the island's independence activists; and in the very years that the United States sought to display Puerto Rico as the showcase of the Caribbean, President Eisenhower remained ignorant of the most elemental facts of Puerto Rican political life. When in June of 1959 Governor Munoz came to the White House to plead for an enhanced commonwealth, the President later made an extraordinary request of his staff: He wanted them to

"examine into the Commonwealth question that seemed to bother Governor Munoz so much."

The President of the United States had no idea what his colonial governor was talking about! And that level of ignorance is as true today as it was then. When in 1992 United States Congressman Jose Serrano told his colleagues that he was going to visit Puerto Rico, their response was to ask the Congressman to bring home some Puerto Rican money for their coin collections.

In Puerto Rico the extent of the United States colonial contempt for the Puerto Rican people is exceeded only by the incredible profits siphoned off by the island's new sugar barons: the pharmaceutical companies operating under the 936 laws.

These laws were first passed in 1976. Tired of seeing money destined for Puerto Rico laundered in Guam and Europe, the United States Congress said that American subsidiaries doing stipulated amounts of business in Puerto Rico could return all profits whenever they wished; and if they invested their money in Puerto Rican banks, even this so called passive income was free of United States Federal taxation.

Theoretically, the 936 profits invested in Puerto Rican banks would be

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used to provide jobs in Puerto Rico. However, a 1978 study at the President James Carter Library warned everyone - 14 years ago - that

"because 936 treasurers are looking for safe, liquid, short-term investments ..."

Puerto Rico could not expect long-term benefits from the new tax laws.

President Carter's advisers were right. Between 1977 and 1987 Puerto Rico's employment in manufacturing increased by 626 jobs. And in April 1990 at Congressional oversight hearings corporate representatives openly admitted that of the $15 billion - and I said "billion" - stockpiled in the Island's banks,

"approximately 75 per cent of it would be CDs issued for tenures of 90 days or less."

If the laws are so absurd, how do they continue in force? Who is in charge?

The answer is what Congressman J. J. Pickle of Texas called "the big papacito", the pharmaceutical companies who in the 1980s married their interests to Puero Ricans of all political persuasions.

Take intangibles. What the new sugar barons did in the early 1980s was transfer the patent to profitable drugs to their Puerto Rican subsidiary. The profits from the drug patent went to the island, they came home tax free, and all the while the mother company on the mainland actually charged off its mainland research and development costs against its Federal taxes.

Even Congress got upset about that rip-off, so in 1986 all interested parties cut a new deal with the Federal Government. As Congressman Charles Rangel of New York told the pharmaceutical industry's representative,

"you know, and I know, and the Chair knows that this Caribbean thing was just thrown in to save the 936 tax programme."

(Mr. Fernandez)

"This Caribbean thing" was a commitment on the part of the Puerto Rican Government and the drug lords to invest at least $100 million a year outside Puerto Rico. In essence, in exchange for funding that would neatly dovetail with the Reagan Administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative, everyone agreed to look the other way on the drug companies' colonial bonanza. For example, even when, four years into "this Caribbean thing", industry representatives publicly admitted that many of the biggest companies brought home 100 per cent of their profits, nothing was done. Nobody seriously challenges Puerto Rico's drug lords, and a May 1992 federal report explains why: profits derived from the Puerto Rican colony are so large that the industry does all the lobbying necessary to maintain the status quo.

For example, Pfizer has 500 employees in Puerto Rico, $156,000 in tax savings per employee and a last-decade average of $69 million a year in tax savings; Upjohn has 775 employees and $68 milion a year in overall tax savings; Merck has 953 employeees and $68 million a year in tax savings.

The drug lords make the sugar barons look like children. Indeed, the level of colonial exploitation has increased in direct proportion to the length of time the United States sanctions what its calls "possessions corporations". The evidence of the political and economic exploitation of the Puerto Rican people is not only overwhelming; it is, as the documents we have attached prove, irrefutable.

My belief is that only the United Nations can provide a peaceful forum for the resolution of Puerto Rico's colonial status. After 94 years it seems quite clear that the "big papacito" in Washington, D.C. will do nothing to change what Senator Millard Tydings called in 1943

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"one of the most unsatisfactory relationships between two Governments that I have ever encountered on the face of the Earth".

Mr. Fernandez withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez (Fundación Andrés Figueroa Cordero) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez.

Mr. GONZALEZ GONZALEZ (interpretation from Spanish): For the third consecutive year, I am here before the Committee on behalf of the Andrés Figueroa Cordero Foundation, a Puerto Rican patriotic organization based in New York City. As in earlier years, I propose to share with you, Mr. President, and with the other representatives in the Committee some ideas and feelings about the cruel and shameful fact that of all the Hispano-American homelands the only one without sovereignty is Puerto Rico. We have come here to speak of independence and not of legal-political cosmetic changes. We are well aware that we are before a world organ here whose body and soul breathe independence - which is only natural since the name of this Committee is the "Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples". It is perfectly clear that the heart of the matter here is independence.

Before delving into the subject, we have the very pleasant duty of cordially greeting the patriots who are struggling throughout the world to win freedom for their peoples: the Palestine Liberation Organization, the POLISARIO Front, the Frente Revolucionário de este Timor Independente (FRETILIN), the Kanak people, the African National Congress of South Africa, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, and others. In Puerto Rico, too, I

(Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez)

greet the Macheteros for their heroic and effective work and the struggling and selfless members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Pary, whose supreme leader - the supreme leader of the Puerto Rican homeland this century - has taught us, among other things, that "the motherland is courage and sacrifice" and that "the final hour has come when we must decide: are we Yankees or Puerto Ricans?"

It is very well known that two years ago our masters in the Yankee Congress decided to entertain a very large group of deluded and semi-cretinous Puerto Ricans with the idea of a "made in the USA" plebiscite, with the purpose, as they said, of consulting the subjected people on its legal political future. We of the Fundación Andrés Figueroa Cordero, and thousands upon thousands of other Puerto Ricans who do not just sit around sucking their thumbs or supinely accepting everything, opposed this - and for a variety of reasons: first, because a so-called made in the USA plebiscite gives us no safeguards whatsoever; and, secondly, because a plebiscite that mocks, ab initio, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) - which requires, for validity, that sovereign powers be transferred to the people before negotiations begin - can be of no more value than the cackling of the hen that has just laid an egg. Lastly, we opposed and continue to oppose this plebiscite because we firmly believe that enslaved peoples such as our own cannot be consulted. What the Yankee Government must do is notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations as soon as possible of the date of Puerto Rico's independence. Following that notification, it must sit down at the table with the legitimate representatives of the people to discuss and reach agreements on the economic, political, social, cultural and other relations that are expected to exist between the two countries after Puerto Rican independence.

(Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez)

I said that an enslaved people cannot be consulted - that is why they are slaves. Free peoples are consulted. This should come as a surprise to no one because it is what always happens and what always has happened. When I speak of consultations, I am speaking of genuine consultations on important, basic, vital questions. Our masters do not consult us on this sort of question. If they do consult us, it is on trivial matters, because they know the answers in advance; their consultations are on matters of little or no importance. Let no one be fooled: this should be obvious to all, like the hat on one's head. If it is not, consider the following.

(Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez)

Did the Yankees consult our people in the 1940s and 1950s when they scattered military bases of all sorts on our small Puerto Rican territory with the aim of turning our homeland into an impregnable fortress? No, they did not consult us. Did they consult the people when they established two nuclear bases, one in the Punta Borinquen area, which they called Ramey Field, and the other in the area of the municipality of Ceiba, which they called Roosevelt Roads and which still exists despite the Tlatelolco Treaty and from which invasions have been launched against the Dominican Republic, Granada, and God knows how many other countries of the Caribbean region? No, they did not consult us. And when the Yankee Government decided in 1952 to remove Puerto Rico from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, did it not impose on our people a spurious plebescite? Yes, it did, and it did not consult us. Not until 1990 did the colonial Governor agree, in a letter which he sent to our master, Mr. Bush, that the United States had never consulted our people, and he condemned the false, insulting plebescite that had been imposed on us in 1952. These three cases are convincing proof that when it is dealing with important matters the master does not consult the slave.

What happened with the plebescite, as it is called, that was supposed to be held in 1993? Our own masters defeated it in one of the congressional committees. And since they do not give a hoot about what the fools who believe them think or about what the countries of Hispanic America and the other Americas say, everything is now up in the air. "Nothing has happened here, and if it has, I do not remember." What will be the next step? That will be decided by the Yankees because, as is always the case, the master orders and the slave obeys. I am referring to the docile slave, like the colonial Government, profiting off the people's backs and serving the Yankees

(Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez)

as an accomplice. We, the rebellious slaves, as we have always said and repeat here today, have not participated and do not participate in Yankee farces, nor are we so naive as ever to believe the so-called democratic promises of the enemy of our people.

It is possible that many of those present have heard, ad nauseum, petitioners - particularly those who are working for the Government and those who want to ingratiate themselves with the governing powers in Washington - say that democracy exists in Puerto Rico, and that on 3 November this year the Puerto Rican people will give one more manifestation of democracy; that picketing is permitted in Puerto Rico because it is a democracy; and so forth. As I said, they speak of "democracy", ad nauseum. But there is no democracy in Puerto Rico, nor can there be, even though the people are asking for it. And the same can be said of New Caledonia, East Timor, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam and Bermuda. How can this be explained? Very simply: democracy and colonialism are mutually contradictory; if there is colonialism, there can be no democracy, and where there is democracy there can be no colonialism, at least de jure.

Democracy is the government of the people - a true government, based on holding all the powers, particularly the basic ones. Could Puerto Rico agree on and sign a non-aggression treaty with any of the countries represented on this Committee? No. Could it agree on an economic, social or cultural treaty? No. These matters are within the jurisdiction of our master. Where, then, is the power of the people? Where, then, is the government of the people? It is in the United States Congress. That is why democracy does not exist in Puerto Rico. What does exist is "Congressocracy". Of course, our masters allow us to decide little things, like who is to pick up the garbage

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and how many classrooms a school to be built will have. How kind of them; how democratic. Puerto Rico cannot even decide who enters and who leaves the country.

On one occasion a primary schoolteacher asked his student: "Tell me, Juanito, what a human being?". And Juanito answered: "A human being, teacher, is a living being with two eyes, two ears, a nose, a mouth, four limbs and a body covered with hair." The teacher said: "Juanito, that can apply to a monkey, too."

One votes in democracies; one votes in colonies as well. But voting is not synonymous with democracy, any more than having two eyes and two ears necessarily makes one a human being. The imperialists and their colonial henchmen are trying to confuse us here and everywhere. They are trying to make us believe that a cat is a hare. They are lying, and they know it. They are pressuring, threatening, giving money and offering university posts. If these democratic caresses of the Yankees gain supporters for the lie that there is democracy in Puerto Rico, then, it is up to them to make peace with their conscience. What is important for the Andrés Figueroa Cordero Foundation is our conviction that no member of the Committee of 24 will pay any attention to the absurd, false idea that there is or can be democracy in colonies.

It is a pity that the decision was taken to postpone the debate on Puerto Rico until 1993, and that this year a draft resolution is not being submitted to the Committee for consideration. We know that the United States has been using its power to transform the United Nations more and more every day into an appendage of its State Department, as it has transformed the Security Council into an appendage of the Pentagon. This we understand was the central

(Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez)

factor in the Committee of 24's decision, which we did not like at all. Now there is nothing that can be done. The decision was taken democratically. And here, to be sure, the concept of democracy fits perfectly, since all the members of the Committee are free, sovereign and independent countries.

(Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez)

We hope that next year the Committee will consider including a preambular paragraph along the following lines:

"Recalling that, as decided by the General Assembly, colonialism must be eliminated throughout the world by the year 2000".

And we hope that an operative paragraph along these lines could be included:

"Requests the administering Power to inform the Secretary-General as soon as possible of the date of independence for Puerto Rico".

Following independence, as the Committee knows, the people of Puerto Rico could if it wished, in the exercise of its sovereign rights, request integration with Venezuela, the United States or any other American country. And in accordance with resolution 1514 (XV), following independence Puerto Rico could if it wished enter into free association with another sovereign country of the region.

Finally, Puerto Rico, following independence, could decide in the exercise of its sovereign rights to return to its pre-independence colonial status, the status it has now. We hope that would never happen, for nothing could be more shameful than a request for slavery; it would without question unleash a horrific civil war in the Republic of Puerto Rico. But let us not anticipate events.

The CHAIRMAN: I assure Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez and any other interested party that the Committee's decision was taken in full consultation with all its members and other interested parties; I assure them that the Committee was not dictated to by anyone, as he suggested.

Mr. Gonzalez Gonzalez withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Carlos Gallisa (Puerto Rico Socialist Party) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Mr. Gallisa.

Mr. GALLISA (interpretation from Spanish): I am Carlos Gallisa, General Secretary of the Puerto Rico Socialist Party, in which capacity I appear before the Committee today.

We are aware of the Committee's decision to adopt no resolution this session on the colonial case of Puerto Rico. We trust that this caution will yield positive results. But this postponement should not be interpreted to mean that the case of Puerto Rico has lost importance or that it demands less attention from the Committee. On the contrary, the colonial case of Puerto Rico will be the decisive indicator of the implementation of the General Assembly resolution mandating the eradication of colonialism by the year 2000.

In the past two years the Committee has been informed of the discussions in the United States Congress between Puerto Rican political figures and congressional committees seeking to enact legislation on a referendum in Puerto Rico. The Committee will recall that those discussions were prompted by President George Bush's appeal to Congress to take legislative action to enable the Puerto Rican people to exercise its right of self-determination.

President Bush's statement to Congress was an important admission that the people of Puerto Rico has never exercised its right of self-determination, contrary to what United States representatives to the United Nations have been telling this Committee for years. President Bush's admission obliges countries that had abstained on or voted against draft resolutions on Puerto Rico, claiming that the General Assembly had already dealt with the case in 1953 through its resolution 748 (VIII), to reconsider their positions. They had been confused by the misinformation provided to the General Assembly by the then representative of the United States that Puerto Rico had exercised its right of self-determination.

(Mr. Gallisa)

Despite the White House statements to which I have referred, the Congress of the colonial Power took no action, and for the present the case is closed, according to congressional leaders. Once more the colonial Power is refusing to shoulder its responsibility to facilitate the decolonization of the world's major remaining colony, Puerto Rico.

The historical record gives us no reason to expect the Washington Government to take any new initiatives on Puerto Rico. The United States Government, with its customary arrogance, refuses to comply with the international mandate and will not even acknowledge the colonial status of Puerto Rico.

That is why it is incumbent on the United Nations, irrespective of congressional talks, to take new initiatives to make the colonial Power take on the international community's mandate to eradicate colonialism by the end of the decade.

Last year, for the first time in the 22 years the Committee has exercised jurisdiction in the colonial case of Puerto Rico, there was unanimity among the four Caribbean and Latin American members of this Committee in voting in favour of the draft resolution then before the Committee. That unanimous endorsement from the region cannot be ignored or underestimated by members in their work on future draft resolutions.

While the Committee continues to consider the matter and works on next year's draft resolution, I want to put on record the existence of 23 political prisoners in United States jails, serving long sentences for the crime of struggling for the freedom of their homeland. We fully endorse the statement made by Mr. Michael Deutsch on behalf of Offensiva 92, and for the sake of the prisoners and their freedom we call once again on this Committee to act.

(Mr. Gallisa)

Looking to next year, a wide range of political forces from Puerto Rico will again appear here with additional information and proposals for action, with a view to the speedy exercise by the Puerto Rican people of their right of self-determination and to the beginning of the process of decolonizing Puerto Rico, the last colony on Earth.

Mr. Gallisa withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rene Torres Platet (Gran Oriente Interamericano de Puerto Rico) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on Mr. Torres Platet.

Mr. TORRES PLATET (Gran Oriente Interamericano de Puerto Rico) (interpretation from Spanish): I am Rene Torres Platet, Grand Treasurer of the Gran Oriente Interamericano de Puerto Rico, a Masonic organization based in Valles de San Juan, Puerto Rico. Accompanying me in this appearance is Brother Rene Colon, Deputy Grand Commander of the 33rd Degree Supreme Council, Universal Jurisdiction, of the northern region of the United States of America.

During the past years when we have appeared before this international forum, we have described what is, in our view, the legal foundation for our people's demands for its self-determination and independence. We have also described how the Government of the United States of America, in open violation of international law, continues to exercise its political, economic and military hegemony over our people, using our country as a training base for its military forces, and how it deceives the international community into believing that our people freely exercised self-determination in 1952 by choosing to create the so-called Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and also when the plebiscite of 1967 was held, whereas all of us now know that there was direct interference by the repressive agencies to manipulate the results.

International law recognizes three options for decolonization, to wit: independence, statehood and commonwealth status. All of these options require, if they are not to be mere caricatures of decolonization, that the freely expressed sovereignty of the people should rest in the hands of the people themselves. In Puerto Rico, the sovereignty of our people rests not with them but rather in the power of the Congress of the United States.

Over the last four years, the various political parties have been deeply

(Mr. Torres Platet)

involved not so much in a process of negotiation as in a process of lobbying, in order to advance their particular views before the Congress of the United States and thus promote their alternatives to the status quo. Neither the bills drawn up by the Energy Committee of the United States Senate nor the bill of the United States House of Representatives represents real alternatives for decolonization in the light of current international law. They do not include provisions for the immediate transfer of power to the Puerto Rican people, nor for the immediate cessation in the country of activities by the repressive agencies of the federal Government, nor for freedom or amnesty for our political prisoners or prisoners of war, nor for supervision of that process by international bodies, and what is more, the aforementioned options do not reflect any consensus of the existing political forces in our country.

The resolution adopted by this Committee last year expressed confidence in the process that was then taking shape in the Congress of the United States in the expectation that it would give rise to an alternative consistent with the guiding principles of international law. The discussion process was aborted in the Congress. Today any thoughts of consultations with the Puerto Rican people about steps towards decolonization based on international law are mere fantasy.

Meanwhile, new national and international events continue to affect our everyday colonial reality. This very month, new comrades in our country's struggle for independence have joined the ranks of political prisoners and prisoners of war in United States prisons, and new names have been added to the list of independentistas convicted of activities related to the patriotic struggle, while still others are awaiting trial or imprisonment.

(Mr. Torres Platet)

Also this month, the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico issued a ruling upholding an earlier ruling handed down by a lower court, calling for the immediate handing over of about 135,000 files that had been compiled in the past decades by the Intelligence Division of the Puerto Rican Police with respect to independentistas and their organizations merely because they advocated the right of our people to self-determination and independence.

This illegal practice was and continues to be carried out by federal agencies in Puerto Rico, even to the point of withholding and copying thousands of those files in the hope of perpetuating these tactics of repression and harassment used against the patriotic movement.

It seems to us, then, a matter of concern that consideration is being given, precisely during the decade that the United Nations has proclaimed the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, to the alternative that the advances made by the independence movement before the international community in 1972 should be reversed by removing the case of Puerto Rico from the jurisdiction of the Special Committee even though the political and economic conditions that then defined Puerto Rico as a colony still prevail.

What is more, if anything can be taken as an irrefutable fact, it is that this denunciation of the colonial character of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is not solely the claim of the independence movement but is endorsed by the forces for statehood and autonomy in the country as well.

General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII) of 27 November 1953 does not apply to the political, economic, legal or social reality of our people. Far from ceasing to exercise its responsibility as Special Committee in the case of Puerto Rico, the goal of this Committee should be to define for the years to come a set of specific measures to be adopted by the Government of the United

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States with a view to facilitating the full exercise of our right to self-determination and independence and, on that basis, to require the Government of the United States to account to this international forum on its compliance with such measures.

None of this replaces, or can ever replace, the historic responsibility of our people, and in particular of those of us who believe in independence for our country, to be the shapers of our process of self-determination, reaffirming our belief in independence as the only option for true decolonization.

At this moment in history we are the largest population in the world subjected to colonial conditions. Our nation has some five and a half million inhabitants, and a million and a half of our brothers and sisters have had to emigrate to the United States for essentially economic reasons.

For Masons, the concept of freedom upheld in our triptych extends - no matter under what old or new order the future of humanity is debated - to the individual and collective claims of peoples and their components, human beings. We know that none of you would renounce the independence you attained after tireless struggles.

Patriotic Puerto Rican Masons understand that we cannot form part of a new order without bringing to a close the old order of colonialism and exploitation. We place before your consciences our demand of "Freedom for Puerto Rico. Now!"

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.